

BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK

National Parks: Their Origins & Development

*Occasional Paper from the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Sara Litke, 1998*

Acknowledgements

The Author

Sara Litke graduated from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs with a masters degree in environmental policy and land use. She wrote this paper in the Summer of 1998 whilst on placement in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority wishes to express its thanks to the World Conservation Union (IUCN), Cambridge, UK for permission to reproduce information about protected area management categories.

WHY PROTECTED AREAS? – A Look at the Past.

Historians have traced the practice of establishing protected areas to the time when forest areas were first protected in India nearly 2000 years ago (Wright & Mattson, 1996). Since then, at various times through history and with varying degrees of success, governments and landowners throughout the world have sought to protect areas of special natural value. The inspiration for establishing protected areas and the objectives sought through their management have not been the same in all places or at all times. In many cases, even the people working for the creation of protected areas at a particular time and place have not been united in their objectives.

The concept of parks as we now define them, with the primary goals of conservation and public enjoyment, has developed relatively recently. The earliest recorded “parks” in Britain were the deer-parks of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Most deer-parks were confined, wooded spaces set aside by landowners for their own use. Historian Oliver Rackham (1986) estimates that there were over 3000 such parks in England at the end of the thirteenth century. The parks may have been used occasionally for sport hunting, but their primary purpose “*was the prosaic supply of venison, other meat, wood, and timber*” for the landowner (Rackham, 1986, p.125). Over time, the focus on parks for game production declined and an interest in landscape emerged. Like deer-parks, landscape parks of the Middle Ages were a fashion of the landowning class, reserved for their use and pleasure. (Rackham, 1986)

The idea of parks for public enjoyment gained prominence during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, due in large part to the spread of industry. Many of those living and working in urban settings began to heed the poets and philosophers, looking to nature as an escape from the drudgery of the industrial communities. In response to this desire among urban residents and to the spread of egalitarian ideals, royal parklands in the cities of both France and England were increasingly opened and maintained for public enjoyment. In 1842, Victoria Park in London became the first reserve expressly purchased and managed for the public. (Runte, 1987)

EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The city park idea also grew in the United States of America in the nineteenth century. The most famous of the USA’s city parks, New York’s Central Park, was established in 1853 in an area that was, at the time, on the outskirts of the city.

During the same period, another concept was taking shape in the USA: the national park idea. The establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 is generally considered to have been the first enactment of the idea of national parks as large natural areas reserved for preservation and public enjoyment. Though the national park concept has spread throughout the world, its creation in the USA was in response to a particular set of circumstances and objectives. The general push for the preservation of natural areas in the public interest that caused the spread of city parks undoubtedly helped to set the stage for the rise of the national park idea. However, the establishment of the early USA national parks was primarily a response to perceptions and motivations different from those that led to the creation of city parks (Runte, 1987). The objectives and motivations that led preservationists to push for national park establishment in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century were also different from those of many of today’s environmentalists (Runte, 1987; Sellars, 1997).

Although national parks have come to play an important role in current environmental preservation efforts, cultural and economic considerations have been

major forces in the establishment and management of the USA's national parks from the beginning. In the nineteenth century, the USA remained, in the view of most Americans, a vast, open country with seemingly inexhaustible natural resources. More than being a response to any perceived ecological need, the creation of the national parks was an effort to establish a distinct national identity for the United States of America. A relatively young nation in the nineteenth century, the USA searched for a means to disprove its cultural inferiority in comparison with the countries of Europe. Many believed that the solution lay in the country's natural and scenic bounty. But even in this respect, the wonders of the eastern region of the country could not surpass areas of the European landscape such as the Alps. Before extensive westward expansion, Niagara Falls was one of few areas about which Americans believed they could boast equality with European natural wonders. The exploitation of the Falls by commercial interests beginning in the 1830s, however, debased the area as a source of national pride in many people's opinion. The experience at Niagara helped to inspire the call for government protection of the natural scenic landmarks being encountered as explorers and settlers moved through the western regions of the country. The government responded by retaining ownership of the particular areas of interest, declaring them as national parks and restricting certain uses within their boundaries. (Runte, 1987)

Despite the fact that Yellowstone and other early national parks in the USA were in part a reaction to the commercialisation of Niagara Falls, their establishment was not without its own economic motivations. The railroad companies especially, as providers of the primary means of westward transportation, had an interest in having the wonders of areas such as Yellowstone preserved from haphazard commercial development, made accessible to the public, and promoted as travel destinations. (Runte, 1987)

Because the national parks were viewed primarily as travel destinations and sources of national pride, the main criterion of site selection was the presence of spectacular scenic beauty or unique natural features. As a result, the parks established during the half century following Yellowstone were exclusively in the western half of the country. Although they were set aside, in principle, for the enjoyment of the whole nation, accessibility to the broad public was not a major concern in the designation of the early parks. In contrast to the urban parks being created during the same period, the national parks remained, in effect, resorts for those with the abundant time and money necessary for extensive travel by rail. Only with the rise of automobile use did the parks begin to be enjoyed by people from a wider range of economic and social classes.

The area boundaries of many American parks have also been greatly influenced by economic pressures. Beginning with Yellowstone and continuing through to some of the more recently designated sites, park proponents repeatedly have had to prove that the lands they sought to protect were "worthless" for any other form of use, such as mining or logging. This de facto requirement of national park lands reinforced the emphasis on spectacular scenery, as the areas of highest value in regard to scenery and natural wonders were generally also the most rugged and thus least desirable for other economic interests. (Runte, 1987)

Historians have referred to the early national park movement in the USA as "*monumentalism*" (Runte, 1987; Blunden & Curry, 1990). The national park system began with the protection of areas of spectacular natural scenery and next moved to sites of historic and cultural importance. Cultural and historic sites were not designated as national parks, however, but were preserved as national monuments, cemeteries, and historic parks. It was not until the 1930s that the actual national park title was given to a site without monumental scenic features. This milestone was passed in 1934 with the establishment of Everglades National Park in recognition of the area's outstanding biological features.

The product of these early patterns for establishing national parks in the USA has been a system that, though arguably successful in achieving other objectives, may be less than ideal for achieving current and emerging ecological goals. The inadequacies of the national parks in this respect were realised by biologists decades ago, but defining the specifics of what the USA's national park system should be has been a challenge from the start. In 1916, the National Park Service was created and charged with managing the 35 existing natural, cultural and historic sites of the "national park system". The park service was given a mandate to both conserve the parks' resources and provide for their recreational use and enjoyment, with no instruction on how to balance the two objectives when they conflicted. The struggle between use and preservation has strongly influenced the development of the park system. Historically, the focus has been on use and enjoyment, occasionally to the detriment of a park's ecosystem in the long run. Preservation has received increasing emphasis with the rise of public concern for the environment and increasing scientific knowledge of the structure and functions of ecosystems. However, even today, with a system that includes more than 360 sites and receives nearly 300 million visitors annually, the question of how best to achieve both halves of the park service's mandate remains without a definitive answer. (Sellars, 1997; Ridenour, 1994).

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The struggle to balance use and preservation is not unique to the national park system of the USA. In fact, it is a defining factor for protected areas through the world.

The roles that protected areas are expected to play in society and in conservation have changed since the establishment of the early national parks, and even over the past two decades (Noss, 1996; Halvorson, 1996; McNeely, 1994). The increasing rareness of natural areas intensifies the demands placed on protected areas to provide opportunities for recreation and tourism. As communities everywhere search for means of economic development and governments work with shrinking budgets, the contributions that protected areas are expected to make to community and economic development will grow, in addition to the traditional demands of recreation and tourism. (McNeely, 1994)

While social and economic demands on parks intensify, scientists are realising the fundamental importance of preserving biological diversity to maintain the invaluable flow of goods and services provided to humans by natural systems. Most conservation biologists now agree that protected areas are an essential part of any strategy to preserve genetic and species diversity; however, most also agree that the international system of protected areas is insufficient in its current state for achieving biodiversity goals (Noss, 1996). Reserves alone are unlikely to maintain viable populations of many species because they usually are too small and isolated from one another. A further limitation is that many of the currently designated protected areas do not achieve in practice the measures of protection they have been granted on paper (McNeely, 1994).

The examples set by Yellowstone and the other early American parks indelibly shaped the definition of national parks as large areas, generally of great scenic beauty, owned and managed by central government and not occupied by humans on a permanent basis. As was the case in the USA, the designation of national parks in many countries was originally a matter of monumentalism and national prestige (Blunden & Curry, 1990). In 1969 the World Conservation Union (IUCN) both reflected and reinforced the American "Yellowstone" example by defining "national park" as a relatively large area that is not materially altered by human exploitation or occupation and where

the highest authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate exploitation or occupation in the whole area” (McNeely, 1994, p3).

Within a decade of adopting this definition, however, the IUCN realised that many important aspects of conservation work fell outside the usual realm of national parks. Recognising the need for more flexibility and attempting to organise the variety of protected area designations already being employed by individual countries, the IUCN defined nine additional management categories to complement national parks (IUCN, 1978; McNeely, 1994). The framework was refined to eight categories in 1984 and to six in 1993. As with the 1978 scheme, distinctions among the six categories of the current scheme are based on management objectives and levels of restrictions placed on human use of the area (see Table 1). The 1997 UN List of Protected Areas shows that there are in total 13,321 designated areas in the 6 IUCN categories as recorded by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre: these add up to 6.1 million square kilometres – about 8.9% of the area of the countries involved (IUCN, 1998).

Table 1. Protected area management categories. (IUCN, 1997)

Category Ia	Strict Nature Reserve: protected area managed mainly for science Area of land and/or sea possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring.
Category Ib	Wilderness area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection Large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition.
Category II	National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation Natural area of land and/or sea, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.
Category III	Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features Area containing one, or more, specific natural or natural/cultural feature which is of outstanding or unique value because of its inherent rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.
Category IV	Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention Area of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats and/or to meet the requirements of specific species.
Category V	Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation Area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.
Category VI	Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems Area containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while providing at the same time a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs.

Major expansion of the international protected areas system by the traditional model of strictly limiting the presence of humans is virtually impossible. The situation from which Yellowstone was carved barely exists any longer anywhere in the world. Few, if any, large tracts of sparsely populated, unutilised land remain outside currently protected areas. In fact, even most existing protected areas were not established on unoccupied and unexploited land, but on land with a long – and often continuing – history of human presence.

Given the reality of the current systems and the intensifying and changing demands being made on protected areas, scientists, preservationists and government leaders are increasingly realising that excluding people from large tracts of land is often not a viable – or desirable – option for protecting nature. In 1992 in Caracas, Venezuela, the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas “*called for replacing the negative image of protected areas as somehow ‘set aside’ from the mainstream concerns of society by a more positive recognition of protection as the process of safeguarding an area’s distinctive contribution to the human community*” (IUCN, 1993). The Congress recommended that in order to take full advantage of these potential contributions, each country should develop its own appropriate strategy for its protected areas. For these strategies to be successful, (1) they must be based on the cultural and socio-economic characteristics of local people and (2) protected areas must be integrated into larger economic and landscape planning frameworks (IUCN, 1993).

New models and strategies continue to emerge as the result of efforts to bury the isolationist view of protected areas. Even in the USA, the national parks are now viewed as one portion of a larger system of protected areas including the national forests and wildlife refuges along with other tracts of land owned and managed by the federal and state governments. Also, a growing number of co-operative management approaches are being employed to ensure conservation on privately owned lands.

The United Nations’ Biosphere Reserve model is now being applied to selected areas in many countries. A Biosphere Reserve consists of a core zone – often a national park – in which exploitation is highly restricted, and surrounding buffer zones, in which exploitation is increasingly less restricted. Other innovative examples come from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Jamaica, which have established their protected areas systems relatively recently. These countries have been supported by the international community in developing their systems through methods that incorporate ecological, social and economic considerations in a culturally appropriate manner (Abuzinada, Child & Grainger, 1992; Anderson, 1992).

UK EXPERIENCE

The United Kingdom also sought to develop a system appropriate to its situation. While the American example of setting aside large tracts of land for conservation and recreation appealed to the leaders of the British conservation organisations in the early twentieth century, the impossibility of applying the American model directly was obvious to everyone involved. As Adrian Phillips, former director of the Countryside Commission observed, “*[Britain] lost the opportunity to establish extensive national parks on the United States model several hundred years before Yellowstone was created*” (IUCN, 1988). Britain has instead followed its own unique and complex path to developing the current system of protected areas. Begun a half century ago, the system was an imaginative extension of conservation ideas and, in many regards, ahead of its time. From their start, the UK’s national parks have been a part of the national land use

planning system. Also, the importance of the contributions of local residents to the success of national parks has been long recognised.

ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL PARKS IN THE UK

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 began the current system of protected areas. A desire to preserve the countryside was the fundamental inspiration for the Act, but this general desire was expressed by different people for quite different, and occasionally conflicting, reasons (MacEwen, 1982). Thus, the 1949 Act was brought about not by the momentum of a single, united conservation movement but rather by the convergence of several movements representing a wide range of visions for the countryside. The differences in motivation, objectives and proposed solutions strongly influenced the system created by the 1949 Act and, to some extent, its evolution since 1949.

INCREASING PUBLIC PRESSURE

The roots of one movement that contributed pressure toward the establishment of national parks lie in the Lake District, the area that now forms the most visited national park in Britain. William Wordsworth was a native and long-time resident of the area and possessed “*a deep understanding of nature and a poetic vision of the landscape*” (MacEwen, 1987, p.5). In 1810, he published his *Guide to the Lakes*, expressing his belief that “*persons of pure taste... deem the district a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy.*” Wordsworth was not alone among artists in his esteem for the rural landscape. The rise of the Romantic movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries influenced many people’s view of the English landscape and inspired a wider public interest in the countryside. Motivated primarily by the aesthetic value of the landscape, Wordsworth and other early Romantics were less concerned with the mechanisms for conserving the countryside than with being observers of it, and celebrating it. They were also not concerned with making the countryside accessible to the broad public. On the contrary, Wordsworth believed that “*the landscape would be ruined if ‘artisans, labourers and the humbler class of shopkeepers’, whose ‘common minds precluded pleasure from the sight of natural beauty’ were to begin on a large scale to visit the countryside.*” (MacEwen, 1987, p.5)

Voluntary societies more overtly concerned with preserving the countryside began to form in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The National Trust, founded in 1895, focused primarily on acquisition to protect areas deemed to be of high aesthetic and cultural value. Other amenity groups sought some form of government designation to protect valued landscapes. Several of these groups joined forces to establish the Councils for the Preservation (later Protection) of Rural England and Wales in 1926 and 1928 respectively (Blunden & Curry, 1990).

During this same time, ecology was emerging as a distinct scientific discipline and increasingly influenced the work of conservationists. Several organisations, such as the British Vegetation Committee and the British Ecological Society, sought conservation of the countryside for its scientific value. The Central (later British) Correlating Committee was formed in 1924 to represent the views of a number of these organisations. The work of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), established in 1889, was also based in scientific principles, but unlike many of the other scientific and naturalist groups, the RSPB had a strong following among the working class. The RSPB had originated less to promote scientific values than to express ethical objections to the unnecessary slaughter of birds as the result of gamekeeping practices (Blunden & Curry, 1990).

A final movement involved in the eventual passage of the 1949 Act was the access and recreation movement. While the scientific and amenity organisations articulated the objectives primarily of the middle class, access and recreation organisations added the voices of the working class. The access movement grew in parallel with the conservation movement, and, to some degree, in opposition to it, as the objectives sought by certain conservation organisations were generally consistent with the notion of restricting public access to valued areas. While united pressure from all groups provided the necessary momentum to pass the 1949 Act, specific provisions of the Act were the result of this perceived conflict between access and conservation objectives.

THE QUESTION OF ACCESS

Several factors conspired to raise public pressure for countryside recreation. Despite Wordsworth's feelings about the effects of mass interest in the countryside, the growth of the Romantic movement did encourage a fondness for the rural landscape among the broad public. Two other factors, however, were more particular to the working class. One factor was the enclosure movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By encouraging the conversion of much heathland, wetland and woodland to agricultural use, the Enclosure Acts greatly diminished the supply of lands to which non-landowners had traditionally enjoyed success. At the same time, increasingly restrictive game laws made the use of the "wasteland" that did remain uncultivated more and more a landowner's privilege. (Blunden & Curry, 1990)

While the enclosure movement was limiting access to the countryside, a final factor, the industrial revolution, was beginning to raise the interest of the working class in countryside recreation. As increasing numbers of people lived and worked in cities, many experienced "*a sense of longing...for their rural heritage*" (Blunden & Curry, 1990, p.23). The common drudgery of industrial employment also promoted many to seek "wide open spaces and fresh air in such leisure time as was available" (Blunden & Curry, 1990, p.23).

Several organisations were formed in the early nineteenth century both as recreation clubs and as means to object to landowners' blocking of traditional rights of way. Many of these groups united to form the Ramblers' Federation in 1930, a forerunner of the Ramblers' Association formed in 1935. While they sought statutory support for public access rights, the recreation groups also took direct action against landowners. One of the largest of these actions was the 1932 mass trespass across the moorland area known as Kinder Scout in the Peak District.

One of few organisations with a membership of both recreationists and conservationists was the Standing Committee on National Parks, formed in 1936. Indeed, "*[the committee's] strength lay in its social and political breadth*" (MacEwen, 1982, p.7). Focused on the single aim of having national parks established in Britain, the Committee received support from urban residents and the working class through the Ramblers' Association, while it had considerable influence among landowners through organisations such as the Councils for the Protection of Rural England and Wales.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Standing Committee and the various individual organisations did succeed in prompting government action. Between 1929 and 1949, the government responded to the growing pressure by commissioning a number of committees to address access and conservation issues. Though the recommendations of many of the committees were not directly implemented, several of their reports strongly influenced the shape of the Act that was eventually passed in 1949.

The Addison Committee was appointed in 1929 “[to] consider and report if it [was] desirable and feasible to establish one or more national parks in Great Britain with a view to the preservation of the natural characteristics... and to the improvement of recreational facilities for the people...” (Blunden & Curry, 1990, p.38). The Addison Committee was the first to propose officially the establishment of two separate types of national parks as a compromise between recreation and conservation interests. The committee recommended that **national reserves** be established and managed with a focus on preservation in areas with outstanding scenery or wildlife habitat. **Regional reserves** were to be designated in areas of high recreational value due to their amenities and their proximity to towns and cities. These and the committee’s other recommendations were never implemented, but they did provide a basis for the efforts of the national park movement over the decades that followed. (Blunden & Curry, 1990)

Another influential report was that of the Scott Committee, presented in 1942. The report differed from most that had preceded it in that it addressed “*the social, economic, aesthetic and ecological problems of the countryside as a whole*” (MacEwen & MacEwen, 1982, p.9). The committee concluded that the character of the countryside was dependent on the continuance of traditional uses and practices. They also made the correlated assumption that agriculture, if prosperous, would ensure the protection and enhancement of the landscape. Based on these conclusions, the committee recommended that non-agricultural development should be allowed in the countryside only in response to a proven national need, while few controls should be imposed on agricultural developments. (Blunden & Curry, 1990; MacEwen & MacEwen, 1982)

In the setting of post-war reconstruction, rising public pressure and abundant committee recommendations at last found an avenue to implementation. As one response to the public’s general cry for a “*better Britain*” the Minister for Town and Country Planning commissioned another report to examine specifically the question of national parks in England and Wales. The report was researched and written by John Dower, an architect, wartime civil servant, and Ramblers’ Association member.

Dower presented his report in May of 1945. He began with the assumption that the case for national parks “*in broad principle, [had] already been made and won*” and the task that remained was to fill in the details (Dower, 1945, p.6). Like many of his contemporaries, Dower fully realised that the landscape to be preserved was the product of the interaction of humans and nature over several centuries, and that preserving the landscape thus depended on continuing that interaction. Recognising that British parks might follow the examples of many already existing national parks in “*scale and purpose*” but not in “*application*”, Dower defined a national park as

an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation’s benefit and by appropriate national decision and action, (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved, (b) access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment are amply provided, (c) wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected, while (d) established farming use is effectively maintained (Dower, 1945, p.6).

Based on this definition, Dower recommended ten areas for national park designation, along with twelve areas for consideration and possible future designation. He also identified numerous “*other amenity areas*” that he considered unsuitable as national parks but deserving of protection, perhaps by local authorities or voluntary organisations.

Following his recommendations on area selection, Dower presented several principles on which to base a national park programme. He argued that “*if national parks are provided for the nation they should clearly be provided by the nation*” (Dower, 1945, p.14). To this end he recommended that the parks should be funded by the central

government and selected and administered by “*an appropriate national body.*” Feeling that the newly proposed provisions of the town and country planning system would provide for ample necessary consideration for the preservation of landscape amenity and architectural design, Dower recommended that the national parks programme be developed within the already existing framework of the planning system.

THE NATIONAL PARKS AND ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1949

In July of 1945, the National Parks Committee was appointed to make specific recommendations for refining and implementing Dower’s proposals in England and Wales. Sir Arthur Hobhouse chaired the committee. After being appointed to his position, Hobhouse set up the Wildlife Conservation Special Committee, chaired by Julian Huxley, to advise the government on the issue of nature reserves. Hobhouse and Huxley presented their reports in 1947.

One result of their work is a distinction that remains even today “*between landscape conservation for amenity and habitat conservation for science*” (Blunden & Curry, 1990, p.49). Hobhouse, like Scott and Dower, based his recommendations on the expectation that the town and country planning system, combined with prosperous agriculture, would provide for sufficient protection of the rural landscape. Direct acquisition of the land was regarded as a method of protection to be applied only on a limited basis, under certain circumstances (MacEwen & MacEwen, 1982). Hobhouse’s recommendations largely followed those made by Dower. He proposed twelve areas for national park designation. Each would be administered by an executive body, separate from the local authorities but responsible to them and the National Parks Commission. The Commission was to be centrally financed under the Ministry of Town and Country Planning.

In contrast, Huxley recommended direct acquisition of land to protect up to 73 selected areas as nature reserves. He recommended establishing the National Biological Service as a scientific body, separate from the planning system, to manage the reserves and conduct research to support government decisions. In its final version, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 largely followed Huxley’s proposals. The Act established the Nature Conservancy as an executive and advisory body to conduct research and own and manage land as nature reserves. (Blunden & Curry, 1990)

The recommendations made by Hobhouse were not so closely followed. Although all ten national parks that resulted from the 1949 Act (as well as the Broads, established separately in 1989) were selected from Hobhouse’s list of twelve, the structure of their administration differed significantly from the proposals of both Hobhouse and Dower. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 had granted new powers to local authorities. The county councils were reluctant to give up these newly acquired powers to the national parks, and Parliament was equally reluctant to rescind them. As a result, both the National Parks Commission and the individual park committees created by the 1949 Act differed from those envisioned by Dower and Hobhouse.

The 1949 Act established the National Parks Commission to designate areas as national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty and to plan for the establishment of long-distance footpaths and bridleways. In regard to the administration of the parks once established, the Commission would serve primarily in an advisory, rather than executive, role. According to the provisions of the Act, each park would be administered by the local authority of the area. (When established, the Peak National Park and the Lake District National Park were the only two parks to have appointed boards with executive powers independent of the local authorities. With the other parks, Joint Committees of the local authorities were appointed when a park lay within the area of

more than one local authority – for parks wholly within the area of a single authority, a planning committee or sub-committee of that authority was appointed.) To ensure that the national interest would be represented on each committee, one-third of the members would be appointed by the Minister of Town and Country Planning, in consultation with the National Parks Commission. The central government would also provide grants to the local authorities to cover up to seventy-five per cent of the expenditures of the national parks.

In regard to recreation, the 1949 Act fell short of the goals of the access movement. Hobhouse had recommended granting the public a legal right of access to all open or uncultivated land. Contrary to this recommendation, the 1949 Act instead effectively denied the right of access to the majority of open country, whether within the national parks or not. The Act provided for the right of access to be granted by order of local authorities or by agreements negotiated individually between local authorities and land owners. In practice, the formal agreement procedure established in the Act has been rarely used, though the public continues to enjoy a fair degree of access through informal agreement.

THE SITUATION IN SCOTLAND

Two separate committees, chaired by Douglas Ramsay and James Ritchie, were appointed to make recommendations for Scotland. The committees favoured outright acquisition of land for national parks. Their recommendations predictably met with strong opposition from landowners. In the end, the situation in Scotland was judged to be different from that in England and Wales and an alternative to national parks was implemented. A system of National Scenic Areas is now protected through development control procedures. A new designation, Natural Heritage Area, was created in 1991 with the aim of *“achieving an integrated approach to the management and sustainable use of areas of high natural heritage value where there are a wide range of interests involved”* (CCW – NPA info, p.8).

CHANGES SINCE 1949

To a large degree, the fundamental provisions of the 1949 Act remain in place today, though modifications have been made to address weaknesses that have become apparent in the Act's implementation and to respond to new challenges that have arisen since 1949.

In 1968, the Countryside Act changed the National Parks Commission to the Countryside Commission. The Countryside Commission retained the responsibilities of the National Parks Commission but gained additional responsibilities for dealing with the wider countryside. In response to growing recreation pressures on the national parks caused by society's increased mobility and affluence, the Countryside Act called for the creation of “country parks” to provide more local recreation opportunities. The Act also gave the national parks some limited powers to regulate certain activities, such as boating on park lakes and the ploughing of moorland within the parks.

The 1949 Act charged the National Parks Commission (a) to preserve and enhance natural beauty in England and Wales, particularly in the national parks; and (b) to promote public enjoyment of the parks and open-air recreation. The Countryside Act 1968 additionally required the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council, and local authorities *“to have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas”* (Section 37). The 1968 Act also expanded conservation responsibilities beyond the Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council and the national parks by requiring that *“every minister, government department and public body shall have regard to the desirability of*

conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside” in the exercise of their functions (Section 11).

The early 1970s brought more changes for the national parks. The Local Government Act 1972, implemented in 1974, unified the administration of the parks by reconstituting the boards of the Peak and Lake District National Parks and calling for the appointment of single National Park Committees for each of the other parks. The 1972 Act maintained the proportional split of committee membership established by the 1949 Act (i.e. two-thirds from local authorities and one-third centrally appointed) but gave the new committees powers of planning and development control within the parks. It also required the appointment of a National Park Officer and preparation of a management plan for each park.

At the same time that these changes were being implemented, a national park review committee, chaired by the Reverend Lord Sandford, issued its report. The committee *“noted increasing conflict between recreation and conservation, and between national parks and other government agencies”* (Blunden & Curry, 1990, p.109). It concluded that good planning and management could resolve most conflicts, but when enjoyment and conservation could not be reconciled, conservation should take priority. This recommendation has become known as the *“Sandford principle.”* The government has long endorsed the principle but did not put it into legislation until 1995.

Based on the experience and assumptions of the time, the 1949 Act granted the national parks few powers in regard to agriculture. In response to dramatic and unforeseen changes in farming practices, the parks and the Countryside Commission have now been given limited control over agricultural developments. Some developments now require planning permission from the national park authorities. Also, authorities may offer financial support to farmers who manage their lands to promote conservation. The work of the Ministry of Agriculture has often been in opposition to the purposes of the national parks; however, since 1986, the Agriculture Act and the Wildlife and Countryside Amendment Act have required the Ministry to consider conservation and recreation objectives in its functions. In pursuit of these objectives, the Ministry made changes to its grants programme and began to define Environmentally Sensitive Areas in which to support traditional farming practices.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 set in train a process for the complete re-organisation of the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council. In England, a body named English Nature is responsible for wildlife conservation, with the Countryside Commission continuing to hold a broad landscape brief. In Wales, a new body – the Countryside Council for Wales – was set up with responsibilities for wildlife and landscape matters as a combined brief, whilst in Scotland, a similar body called Scottish Natural Heritage performs these functions.

A second review of the national parks was completed in 1991 under the Chairmanship of Professor Ron Edwards. The report of the review body is entitled *“Fit for the Future”* and it generated much debate about the role of the National Parks (Edwards, 1991). The government responded to the review in the Environment Act 1995. The 1995 Act created National Park Authorities (NPAs) to administer the parks. Although the membership of the NPAs, like that of the former committees, includes county councillors, the NPAs are executive bodies, independent of the county councils. For the English parks, NPA membership now includes parish council representatives and the numbers of other local authority representatives and national appointees have been reduced accordingly. (In Wales, the NPA membership maintains the previous 2:1 split between local authorities and national interests.) The dual purposes of the national parks were amended to be (1) conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas, and (2) promoting opportunities for the understanding and

enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public. The Act reaffirms that each NPA “*should seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park*” but stipulates that the Parks should not incur significant costs in so doing (Section 62). It also gives statutory backing to the Sandford principle by requiring the NPAs to give priority to conservation over enjoyment when a conflict between the two purposes cannot be resolved. In an effort to address the conflict between the parks and other government agencies, the Act calls for all public authorities to show regard for the purposes of the national parks when carrying out work affecting the parks.

OUR NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS TODAY & TOMORROW

Falling within the IUCN management category of *Protected Landscapes*, the landscapes of the national parks of England and Wales today remain largely in the hands of the farmers and landowners who have shaped the countryside for generations. About a quarter of a million people live and work in the national parks. Private landowners actually own around 75% of the total area of the Parks. The National Park Authorities themselves are not significant landowners – on average the National Park Authorities own less than 3% of the Park lands. (An exception is the Brecon Beacons National Park which has a 13% landholding in its area.) The parks are “*national*” because of the special value the areas have for the whole nation. This value derives from their outstanding beauty, the recreation opportunities they provide, and the special interaction between humans and nature that they represent.

The work of the national park authorities to maintain and enhance the value of the parks includes a variety of activities. Each authority prepares a national park management plan to set out policies for management of the park and for the organisation and provision of facilities and services within the park. Each NPA also serves as the local planning authority within park boundaries. The authorities work with communities within the parks to develop local plans to guide land use and development. Through consultation and the provision of grants, the NPAs work with farmers and other land and building owners to achieve conservation aims. Each park employs an ecologist and an archaeologist and works closely with the Countryside Commission, the Countryside Council for Wales, and English Nature to guide conservation efforts. (CCW – National Park Authorities info document)

In pursuit of the recreation purpose of the national parks, most NPAs have the responsibility for maintaining the public paths within their parks and negotiating rights of way with landowners. Some parks provide facilities such as car-parks, picnic sites and camp sites. All NPAs operate ranger or warden services to advise visitors, perform practical conservation tasks, and represent the NPAs in the community. To serve communities and visitors, the parks also operate information centres and provide a variety of educational and interpretive programmes. (CCW – NPAs)

In addition to the national parks, various other protected areas have been designated throughout the United Kingdom (See Table 2). Like the national parks, most of these areas are owned by private landowners. Conservation is ensured through a combination of statutory requirements and management incentives. Additionally, there are conservation areas which are owned and managed by the National Trust and other voluntary organisations. Many of these areas lie within the national parks and other designated protected areas.

Table 2. Categories of Protected Landscape (Adapted from Poore, D. & J. 1987)

<p>National Park (England and Wales)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These were designated by the National Parks Commission/Countryside Commission. • <i>“an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation’s benefit and by appropriate national decision and action, (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved, (b) access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment are amply provided, (c) wild life and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected, while (d) established farming use is effectively maintained.”</i> (John Dower, 1945)
<p>National Scenic Area (Scotland)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified by the Countryside Commission for Scotland and designated by the Secretary of State for Scotland. • <i>“Areas...unsurpassed attractiveness which must be conserved as part of our national heritage.”</i> (Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1978)
<p>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England and Wales)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated by the Countryside Commission (and the Countryside Council for Wales). • <i>“Parts of the countryside of England and Wales which, while they lack extensive areas of open country suitable for recreation and national park status, are nonetheless of such fine landscape quality that there is a national as well as a local interest in keeping them so.”</i> (Countryside Commission, 1983)
<p>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Northern Ireland)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated by the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). • <i>“An extensive area of countryside within which the outstanding natural and cultural landscapes demand policies to safeguard their quality and to promote their enjoyment by the public.”</i>
<p>Heritage Coasts (England and Wales)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined by the Countryside Commission (and the Countryside Council for Wales) and specified in local authority structure plans. • <i>“A means for effective protection and management of our finest stretches of coast”</i> (Countryside Commission, 1991)
<p>Environmentally Sensitive Areas (United Kingdom)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated by the Minister of Agriculture. • <i>“Areas of national environmental significance whose conservation depends on the adoption, maintenance or extension of a particular form of farming practice; in which there have occurred, or there is a likelihood of, changes in farming practices which pose a major threat to the environment; which represent a discrete and coherent unit of environmental interest; and which would permit the economical administration of appropriate conservation aids.”</i> • Based on the voluntary co-operation of farmers and landowners. (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1989)
<p>Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England, Scotland and Wales) Areas of Special Scientific Interest (Northern Ireland)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notified by English Nature (England), Scottish Natural Heritage (Scotland), Countryside Council for Wales (Wales) or the Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). • Any area of land which, in the opinion of the appropriate authority, is of special interest by reason of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features. (Countryside Council for Wales, 1993)
<p>National Nature Reserve (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declared by English Nature (England), Scottish Natural Heritage (Scotland), Countryside Council for Wales (Wales) or the Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). • Land of national importance being managed as a nature reserve by the Agencies above or by management agreements with other conservation organisations.

Entering the twenty-first century, the British system of protected areas faces challenges and threats similar to those being faced by protected areas around the world. Following the 1992 Congress in Caracas, the IUCN-UK committee set up a task force to guide implementation of the Congress's recommendations. The task force reported that many of the recommendations are already being addressed in the UK through various initiatives. They also, however, saw room for improvement. Among the weaknesses identified were the lack of an overall strategy or collaborative framework for protected areas and the lack of a consistent monitoring methodology for evaluating the system and the individual areas. The threats identified by the task force include pressure from development and land use changes, rising numbers of visitors, and the external threats of pollution and climate change.

The British system of protected landscapes has many strengths, including its flexibility and its ability to grow within the framework of existing policies and legislation. Perhaps its greatest strength is that *"it places the responsibility for protection (within national guidelines) firmly with the people who live in and use the countryside"* (Poore, D & J, 1987 p.6). These strengths rank high among the capabilities that nations around the world now seek to develop for their own protected areas – there may be much that the British experience of the past fifty years can contribute to their efforts. The United Kingdom will continue to refine its protected area management programmes so that the national parks and other areas will be better able to meet the many challenges they face today and those they will undoubtedly face tomorrow.

References and Further Reading

- Abuzinada, A.H., Child, G. & Grainger, J. (1992) *The Approach to Planning and Initiating a System of Protected Areas in Saudi Arabia*, Quoted in- Module Two, Protected Landscape Management, MSc. Distance Learning Pack, ICPL, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, UK.
- Anderson, S. (1992) *The Development of a Plan for a System of Protected Natural Areas for Jamaica*, Quoted in- Module Two, Protected Landscape Management, MSc. Distance Learning Pack, ICPL, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, UK.
- Blunden, J. & Curry, N. (Ed) (1990) *A People's Charter?* HMSO, London, UK.
- Countryside Commission for Scotland (1978) *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*, Countryside Commission, Scotland.
- Countryside Commission (1983) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Policy Statement*, Countryside Commission Publication 157, Countryside Commission, Cheltenham, UK.
- Countryside Commission (1991) *Heritage Coasts – Policies and Priorities 1991*, Countryside Commission Publication 305, Countryside Commission, Cheltenham, UK.
- Countryside Council for Wales & Countryside Commission (1993) *The National Park Authority*, Countryside Council for Wales, Bangor, Wales.
- Countryside Council for Wales (1993) *Sites of Special Scientific Interest – A Guide for Landowners and Occupiers*, Countryside Council for Wales, Bangor, Wales.
- Dower, J. (1945) *National Parks in England and Wales*, HMSO, London, UK.
- Edwards, Professor R. (1991) *Fit for the Future*, Countryside Commission, Cheltenham, UK.
- Foster, J. (Ed) (1988) *Protected Landscapes*, IUCN, Cambridge, UK & Countryside Commission, Cheltenham, UK.
- Halvorson, W.L. *Changes in Landscape Values and Expectations: What Do We Want and How Do We Measure It?* In- Wright, R.G. (Ed) (1996) *National Parks and Protected Areas: Their Role in Environmental Protection*, pp15-30, Blackwell Science, USA.
- HM Government (1949) *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*, HMSO, London, UK.
- HM Government (1968) *Countryside Act 1968*, HMSO, London, UK.
- HM Government (1972) *Local Government Act 1972*, HMSO, London, UK.
- HM Government (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*, HMSO, London, UK.
- HM Government (1990) *Environmental Protection Act 1990*, HMSO, London, UK.
- HM Government (1995) *Environment Act 1995*, HMSO, London, UK.
- IUCN (1978) *Categories, objectives and criteria for protected areas*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
- IUCN (1994) *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
- IUCN (1998) *1997 United Nations List of Protected Areas*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

IUCN UK Committee (undated) *Action for Protected Areas in the UK*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

MacEwen, A. & M. (1982) *National Parks: conservation or cosmetics?* Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, UK.

MacEwen, A. & M. (1987) *Greenprints for the Countryside?* Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, UK.

McNeely, J.A. (Ed) (1992) *Parks for Life*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

McNeely, J.A. (1994) *Protected areas for the twenty-first century: working to provide benefits for society*, Unasylva 176 Vol 45.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1989) *Environmentally Sensitive Areas*, HMSO, London, UK.

National Parks and Conservation Association (1994) *Our Endangered Parks*, Foghorn Press, California, USA.

Noss, R.F. *Protected Areas: How Much is Enough?* In- Wright, R.G. (Ed) (1996) *National Parks and Protected Areas: Their Role in Environmental Protection*, pp91-200, Blackwell Science, USA.

Poore, D. & J. (Ed) (1987) *Protected Landscapes – The United Kingdom Experience*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

Rackham, O. (1986) *The History of the Countryside*, J.M. Dent & Sons, London, UK.

Ridenour, J.M. (1994) *The National Parks Compromised*, ICS Books, Indiana, USA.

Runte, A. (1987) *National Parks The American Experience*, University of Nebraska Press, USA.

Sellars, R.W. (1997) *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, Yale University Press, New Haven, USA.

Wright, R.G. & Mattson, D.J. *The Origin and Purpose of National Parks and Protected Areas* In- Wright, R.G. (Ed) (1996) *National Parks and Protected Areas: Their Role in Environmental Protection*, pp 3-14, Blackwell Science, USA.

Note:

IUCN publications can be ordered from:

IUCN Publications Services Unit

219c Huntingdon Road

Cambridge

CB3 0DL

UK

PARC CENEDLAETHOL BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG